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ATTACHMENT

June 1, 1961

To: G - Mr. Alexis Johnson

From: S/P - George C. McGhee

762.00

Attached is the paper on a new approach to the German-European problem about which I spoke to you yesterday. You will understand that the purpose of the paper is to stimulate thinking on this subject and that it does not contain firm policy recommendations.

Attachment

April 10, 1961 paper,  
"A New Approach to the  
German-European Problem."

191-2/22796

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REVIEWED BY HOLSTEN DATE 4/3/86

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S/P  
April 10, 1961

A New Approach to the German-European Problem

A. Purpose

This paper attempts to set forth briefly the rationale for, and the possible elements of, a new approach to the German problem, and thereby to the wider European problem. This is not offered as a definite proposal, but merely as a general line of thinking to be considered.

It represents a substantial departure from the position taken in the Western Peace Plan of 1959 as offered at the Geneva talks. It does this on the grounds that this plan seems obsolescent and offers no possibility of resolving the German and related problems. It is believed that the Western powers should review the 1959 plan with a view to possible talks with the USSR aimed at an eventual settlement of the German-European problem.

If viewed favorably, such an approach might be considered by a Departmental working group, with a view to arriving at agreed recommendations. These, if approved, would need to be coordinated with Defense and perhaps other agencies, and eventually offered to our major Western allies with a view to developing a Western negotiating position in possible talks with the USSR.

B. Rationale

We at present face an impasse in Europe based on the de facto partition of Germany, a legacy from World War II. Since 1945, the Soviet-Western confrontation in Europe has hardened. Both sides have built their security arrangements upon it. All efforts, from 1947 through 1959, to negotiate a settlement have been abortive.

US policy respecting Germany has been, and is, essentially an outgrowth of containment policy. It is basically defensive, seeking to establish bulwarks against further Soviet expansion in Europe. In this respect it has succeeded.

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We have now entered a phase of history beyond the "postwar era" of adjustment and consolidation. Change is in the air. There has been a remarkable resurgence of Europe, notably in the West but also east of the iron curtain.

Allies on both sides are restive. The cold war has broken far out of the bounds of the European confrontation. Any "Maginot line complex" on our part tends to inhibit, even paralyze our diplomacy.

Only one thing seems generally agreed between the West and the USSR respecting Central Europe-- that Germany and Berlin are not worth the price of a nuclear war, even while the threat of such a war remains the chief deterrent to aggression. Both sides actually aim at a position of pre-dominance in Europe--aims clearly mutually exclusive. There has not been, and there is not likely to be, any progress toward a European settlement on the basis of present Western and Soviet policies.

It becomes ever more dangerous to rest our hopes for peace in Europe on perpetuation of the status quo. This does not work to our advantage, and may work to Soviet advantage if a resurgent Germany sees unity as possible only through a deal with the USSR.

Meanwhile the protracted stalemate obstructs efforts toward arms control, thwarts political settlement, maintains tensions, and increases the risks of ultimate general war.

Withdrawal of Soviet forces from Central Europe is one of our major objectives: essential to a German settlement, arms control in Central Europe, and European security generally. It can not be forced. It can only be effected, if at all, by diplomacy.

Germany lies at the heart of the present rigid and dangerous confrontation. Here, as elsewhere, ferment and change are at work. To avert mounting dangers and achieve our major objectives in Europe we need a strategy that is mobile and not static, geared to a realistic appraisal of possibilities, and directed toward the attainment of paramount political goals.

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This requires a fresh look at the German problem. Inaction might mean being overtaken by events. We can hope to influence events in Central Europe, but not if we cling to policies that time and change make ever more obsolescent.

New policies are essential.

C. Elements

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Germany

June 10, 1961

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MEMORANDUM FOR S/P - Mr. McChes

I have read the S/P paper on "A New Approach to the German-European Problem". While I am not sufficiently familiar with all the nuances of the German problem to comment in detail, it certainly seems to me that some new policies are important and should be fully explored. I somewhat have the feeling that we may be approaching about the same situation with respect to policies towards Germany as we previously were with respect to China.

BI  
AS

U. Alexis Johnson

U:UJohnson/rjs

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